

Postdeployment Homecoming and Reunion

Families

Operation R.E.A.D.Y.

Resources for Educating About Deployment and You

Homecoming and Reunion

Families

Facilitator's Guidelines

This module provides the facilitator with resources needed to plan and conduct a workshop. The module has **4 sections**:

- Facilitator's Guidelines
helps the facilitator prepare for the workshop
- Workshop Overview
highlights the key components of the lesson plan
- Workshop Plan
provides the facilitator with an outline for conducting the workshop
- Workshop Resources
include program activities, supporting videos, flyer, handout materials, and transparency masters

Topic: Families

Goal: Families can prepare for the challenges of reunion before returning to their loved ones.

Audience: This session is designed for families. It is most helpful to offer this work-shop before reunion occurs.

Time Required: 2 1/2 hours

Room Requirements: This workshop requires a room large enough to accommodate the participants. It is designed as a group process for roundtable discussions, with 8–10 people at each table. The room should be arranged for maximum visibility of the flip charts, videos, and overheads.

Facilitator's Preparation:

1. Reserve a location for conducting the workshop that will accommodate the number of participants.
2. Prepare flyers (master located under Flyer Master) and distribute them 1–2 weeks before the workshop.
3. Familiarize yourself with the goals of the workshop.

4. The facilitator's job is to lead the workshop, which includes distributing handouts and organizing group flip chart activities. Other tips include:

- ✎ plan an ice breaker
- ✎ encourage participation
- ✎ check for understanding
- ✎ prepare room
- ✎ make workshop personal
- ✎ gather needed material
- ✎ enjoy yourself
- ✎ offer amenities, such as parking and refreshments

5. Suggested activities are presented in square brackets ([]) in the lesson text.

The lesson text is meant to assist you and is not intended to be read aloud to the participants. The **suggested activities** list the visuals, handouts, or group activities that are used at particular points in the workshop.

6. Prepare overhead transparencies from the Transparency Masters provided:

- #1 Families
- #2 Objectives
- #3 Ways to Communicate
- #4 Expectations of Change

7. Preview the video, *Getting Back Together (710652/TVT 20-1048)*, and the Video Discussion Guide if you plan to use them in the workshop.

Note: A video is not used for every workshop. Determine if the participants have seen it and expand your workshop, if necessary, to show the video.

8. Prepare flip charts for group use.

Divide one sheet into two columns, **Joy** and **Concern**.

Label another sheet **Adjustments for Family Members**.

Prepare flip chart for facilitator use, **Families**.

Divide one sheet into three columns, **Physical**, **Mental Attitudes**, and **Actions**.

Label another sheet **Helpful Resources**.

9. Reproduce the necessary number of handouts from the Handout Masters:

- #1 Adjustments for Families
- #2 Homecoming and Reunion Brochure

10. Prepare table tents for group discussions:

- Participants with Children
- Participants without Children

11. Assemble all other necessary workshop materials and equipment

Workshop materials:

- Flip chart paper on 1 easel and colored markers
- Extra markers for flip chart paper activity at tables
- Masking tape for securing charts
- Pens and pencils for participants' use

Equipment:

- Overhead transparency projector and screen
- Television and VCR

Homecoming and Reunion

Families

Workshop Overview (time 2½ hours)

Estimated Time	Presentation	Visual-V	Handout-H	Brochure-B
10 minutes	Introduction Objectives	V#1 V#2		
10 minutes	Reunion Joys and Concerns	Flip Chart activity (in groups)		
20 minutes	<i>Getting Back Together</i>	Video		
10 minutes	Group Discussion			
5 minutes	Ways to Communicate	V#3		
5 minutes	Intimate Relationships	B, Item #1		
15 minutes	Break			
5 minutes	Expectations of Change	V#4		
30 minutes	Adjustments for Family Members	H#1 Flip Chart activity (in groups)		
5 minutes	Stress	B, Item #2 and B, Item #3		
5 minutes	Symptoms of Stress	Flip Chart activity (facilitator)		
10 minutes	Stress-Coping Skills	B, Item #4		
10 minutes	Sources of Assistance	B, Item #5 Flip Chart activity (facilitator) B, Items #6 and #7 H#2		
5 minutes	Conclusion	H#3		

Homecoming and Reunion

Families

(time 2📄 hours)

Introduction

[Visual #1: **Homecoming and Reunion**☐**Families**]

Welcome to the Homecoming and Reunion workshop for **families**. This session will prepare you for the challenges of reunion so that problems can be minimized and positive aspects of homecoming can be maximized.

Your soldiers have had a similar workshop in their theater of operations. The purpose of these workshops is to help smooth the adjustments of reunion for both you and your soldier.

The material we will cover applies to all families. Activities are designed so that you will benefit by working with others who have had similar experiences.

Feel free to share your experiences and concerns. Sharing will help all of us to understand that we have a great deal in common when it comes to reunion adjustment.

At this time, please group yourselves according to your personal situation. Tables are designated as follows:

- ☞ Participants with children
- ☞ Participants without children

(allow a few moments for groups to form)

Objectives

[Visual #2: **Objectives**]

During our time together, we will:

- ☞ Establish realistic expectations about reunion
- ☞ Recognize symptoms of stress
- ☞ Identify helpful and reliable sources of assistance

Reunion Joys And Concerns

I would like to begin by asking you what reunion means to you.

(take a few responses)

The dictionary states that a reunion is the reuniting of people after a period of separation. Close your eyes for just a moment and picture what your reunion will be like.

Focus on some joys you expect at reunion time.

Now focus on some concerns you have about reunion.

(allow participants a few moments to imagine what reunion will be like—both the joys and concerns they may anticipate)

[Flip Chart activity (in groups)]

There are flip charts at your tables. For the next 5 minutes, ask a volunteer at each table to list your thoughts regarding joys and concerns about reunion.

(allow 5 minutes to complete)

Would someone from each group post their list on the wall, please.

(volunteers post flip charts on wall with masking tape)

[Facilitator leads discussion]

Let's take a moment to compare lists. As you can see, many of you are looking forward to the same joys, and many of you have similar concerns. Let's discuss the common items you have on your lists.

(take a few moments to discuss and compare some common joys and concerns from the groups' charts)

Getting Back Together

Expectations and fantasies are an important part of our lives. It does not matter if expectations are joys or concerns about homecoming and reunion.

No matter what you daydream about, you may not be physically or mentally able to carry out some of your expectations and fantasies. There is no way to predict what homecoming and reunion will really be like.

The video we are about to see, *Getting Back Together*, has been made especially for homecoming and reunion. The people portrayed in the video share how their expectations and fantasies are lived out when they are reunited. The purpose of this video is to assist you in understanding the adjustment process after a separation by addressing issues that may apply to each of you.

As you watch the video, note the thoughts and feelings expressed by both the soldier and the spouse. It deals with the things we just talked about—the joys, the concerns, the expectations, and fantasies of reunion. The video also teaches communication techniques.

(allow 20 minutes for video)

*[Show the video **Getting Back Together**]*

Group Discussion

[Facilitator leads discussion]

Now that the video is over:

- ✎ What did you learn from it?
(take a few responses)
- ✎ What coping and communication techniques were used?
(take a few responses)
- ✎ What did you see in the video that may apply to you?
(take a few responses)

(allow 10 minutes for discussion)

One thing to remember from the video and in our group discussions is that not only have you changed, but so has your soldier.

Problems have not magically disappeared. All the images you have about your reunion may not happen. Thus, it is important to understand that things will probably be different from what you expect.

Accepting change is a major factor in reestablishing you and your children's relationship with your soldier after a separation.

Keeping this in mind, if I had asked a room full of soldiers the same questions about their joys and concerns, do you think your list would match with theirs?

(take a few responses)

Many of their expectations may be the same, but some may be very different. We are beginning to understand that our expectations and theirs may not coincide.

Ways To Communicate

*[Visual #3: **Ways to Communicate**]*

A key to understanding different expectations is in how well we have communicated during the separation and how well we will communicate when reunited. What are some ways we could communicate during separation?

(take a few responses—answers may include letters, cards, tapes, videos, and phone calls)

Letters and cards are the least expensive way to communicate. Sometimes, phone calls are available during a deployment, but phone calls can be very expensive. Cassette tapes and video tapes are also good methods of communication.

Your soldier will return soon, so what do you say or write besides the "kids are okay," or "I went to work today."

(take a few responses)

In the short time before your soldier returns, you could start talking and writing about some of your expectations. Lines of communications should be open and two-way. Encourage your soldier to communicate their own expectations for reunion.

Some **joy** expectations you might express are the same ones you listed on the flip chart paper.

You might begin by saying that you would like to go to a movie with your soldier. You might tell your soldier that you would really enjoy a quiet evening alone, or a break from the kids. In return, ask them what they are looking forward to.

You could also begin to express some of your concern expectations. You may be concerned about how you handled the children and the household tasks. You may confide that you enjoyed certain responsibilities.

Continuous communication during separation plays a critical role in maintaining an emotional bond between the soldier and those back home.

By expressing your expectations before reunion and by asking your soldier about their expectations, you are establishing a line of communication that could cross many barriers and minimize problems during reunion.

Intimate Relationships

[Distribute Brochure: ***Homecoming and Reunion***]

Among the major adjustments you face when your soldier returns is your intimate and sexual relationship. The best thing you can do is to go slowly. Don't anticipate normal sexual relations for a few days. There is no need to rush things.

You and your partner are likely to feel like strangers with each other, and strangers do not have good sexual relations. Take the time to let your sexual relationship reestablish itself naturally. Rushing sexual relations could create major communication problems.

A few ideas that may be helpful during this adjustment period are:

- ☞ Try not to rush
- ☞ Talk a lot about how you feel, and . . .
- ☞ Ask how your partner feels about intimacy and sexual matters
- ☞ Read brochure Item #1, **Reestablishing Intimate and Sexual Relations**, for other helpful ideas.

[Brochure Item #1: ***Reestablishing Intimate and Sexual Relations***]

No matter how well prepared you are or how well you communicated during deployment, there are many adjustments that you and your children to will face when your soldier returns.

Let's take a 15-minute break. When we return, we will discuss theses changes.

[Break 15 minutes]

Expectations Of Change

[Visual #4: *Expectations of Change*]

Let's begin by discussing change. Change can be viewed in two ways. One way to view change is either as a crisis or threat. The other way is to view change either as a hidden opportunity or as a slight disruption in the way things used to be.

If change is viewed as a crisis or threat, people try to pretend the change didn't happen. They may use inappropriate coping strategies. They may avoid or deny the change. They may spend time wishing things were the way they used to be.

Another poor coping mechanism people sometimes use is to blame everyone and everything else for the change. This only leads to a dead end and may cause even more problems.

If change is viewed as a hidden opportunity or merely as a slight disruption in the way things used to be, then it is usually more easily accepted.

People who view change in this positive way acknowledge that change has occurred, and that it can become an accepted part of life. Often, this view of change mobilizes people into new ways of thinking, which leads to a fresh beginning.

What changes have taken place while your soldier was away?

(take a few responses)

How do you think these changes will be perceived by your soldier when they return?

(take a few responses)

Ideally, all change should be viewed as hidden opportunity. Remember that no matter how accepting of change you are, it takes time for the change to become part of your way of thinking or acting.

There is no definite period in which change begins to feel normal. On average, it takes several weeks, or even months, depending on the length of separation and on your ability to accept change.

Adjustments For Family Members

[Handout #1: *Adjustments for Families*]

Now that we have discussed change, let's look at how it affects our reunion adjustment. Look at the activity handout and take a few minutes to complete it on your own.

(allow 5 minutes to complete)

Now, discuss what you have written with others in your group and ask a volunteer to record your responses. After the discussion, a person from each group may share what was discussed. Please take a few minutes to do this.

(allow 10 minutes to complete discussion)

[Group reports]

At this time I would like to ask a volunteer from each table to share with us what you discussed. We'll cover each question in the activity handout.

[Group discussion and Flip Chart activity]

(allow 2 minutes per group report)

As you can see, adjustments may be necessary when your soldier returns. There is always a tendency to take the negative, or crisis, view of change. This is normal.

Some people want to overdo, catch up on time they have missed, spend money, and generally go full speed ahead without much direction.

The most important thing to remember is to go slowly. Reestablish your relationship with your soldier and try not to let the stress of adjustment overtake you.

Stress

Everyone involved in the separation, including your soldier, has had to cope with stress. Children also experience stress, and change and uncertainty may often frighten them.

Take a moment to look at Item #2 in your brochure, **Children's Reactions to Soldier's Return**, which offers techniques to help children adjust to reunion.

*[Brochure Item #2: **Children's Reaction to Soldier's Return**]*

(allow a moment for review)

Perhaps those of you with children have had the opportunity to use the Operation R.E.A.D.Y. *Children's Workbooks*, which are designed to help them cope with the effects of being separated from a parent.

These workbooks are written for specific age groups and have proven to be very effective. If you haven't used them, contact your Family Support Group leader or the local ACS or Family Program Coordinator to obtain a copies. I have a few copies available if you would like one after this session.

*[Brochure Item #3: **Homecoming and Reunion Stress**]*

Take a few minutes to look at Item #3, **Homecoming and Reunion Stress**, in your brochure about reunion stresses. You will notice that they mirror what we have discussed so far. This handout includes hints which could be very helpful.

(allow a moment for participants to review)

Symptoms Of Stress

Because stress can be a major factor in the reunion process, let's talk about some symptoms of stress. Many of these symptoms are the same, no matter what the cause. Think about the last time you were under stress.

[Flip Chart activity (Facilitator)]

How did you feel physically?

*(facilitator writes responses on flip chart in **physical** column)*

What was your mental attitude?

*(facilitator writes responses on flip chart in **mental attitude** column)*

How did you act toward other people?

*(facilitator writes responses on flip chart in **actions** column)*

You may experience many of these symptoms when the soldier returns. But there is often a period called the "honeymoon period" which you may also experience. Just having your soldier home again can make everything seem exciting.

However, the honeymoon period will end. That's when stress often sets in—when you realize things are not living up to your expectations and fantasies. In fact, things have changed and you may become stressed out.

*[Brochure Item #4: **Stress Symptoms**]*

Take a moment to look at Item #4, **Stress Symptoms**, in your brochure. These are the symptoms you should be aware of both now, and when your soldier returns.

(allow a moment for participants to review handout)

Stress-Coping Skills

If your soldier seems to cut you off for a period, this is a normal reaction. If it continues, and the soldier does not return to their "old self" after several months, it could be caused by stress.

If you notice your soldier becoming too detached, unable to sleep, or if they seem like a different person, it is time to encourage them to seek outside assistance.

Once your soldier feels truly at home and safe, behavior, such as jumpiness, being overprotective, or going to extremes should subside. Patience is the key, so be willing to listen and try to empathize with them.

Finally, do not forget yourself. You, too, will be going through a period of adjustment. If you notice any of the danger signals we have discussed, think about where you could get assistance.

As we have said before, many military families may find the stress experienced during reunion more difficult than the separation itself.

[Brochure Item #5: **Reunion Stress-Coping Strategies**]

A list of strategies you could use to make life easier for you and your family during this adjustment period can be found in your brochure in Item #5, **Reunion Stress-Coping Strategies**.

Sources Of Assistance

[Flip Chart activity (Facilitator)]

What if you notice that your soldier or your children are experiencing many feelings from the **Stress Symptoms** list? Where could you obtain help with your concerns and with the stress you may be experiencing? I will write your answers on the flip chart paper.

(record answers on flip chart)

[Brochure Items #6 and #7: **Sources of Support and Assistance, and Other Sources of Assistance**]

There is no shame in asking for assistance from trained professionals when you need help. Item #6 in your brochure, **Sources of Support and Assistance**, lists contact people. Item #7, **Other Sources of Assistance** is blank.

[Brochure Item #8]

If you will record the information we have captured on the flip chart paper in your brochure under Item #8, you will have additional resources should you or a loved one need assistance.

Anyone in the chain of command can put you in touch with the organizations that we have listed. Most of them are listed in your post or city phone books. The key is to ask for the assistance when you need it.

Conclusion

As we have discussed, reunion can be a challenge. But if you begin right now to communicate your expectations and to encourage your soldier to do the same, the transition may be easier.

Keep in mind that there will be stresses because of the changes that have occurred. Try to look at change as a hidden opportunity or a slight disruption, and not as a crisis or dead end. A positive outlook will make for a smoother adjustment.

When your soldier returns, workshops will be offered which cover such areas as adjusting to relationships with partners and children, positive communication strategies, and resolving interpersonal conflicts.

Check with your commander, first sergeant, or family support group leader for more information about these workshops.

[Handout #2]

Homecoming and Reunion

Families

Do you have realistic expectations about reunion?

Can you recognize symptoms of stress?

Would you like to know sources of assistance?

This workshop will provide you with:

- ✦ take-home information
- ✦ checklists
- ✦ practical ideas
- ✦ opportunity to meet people with common interests

Join us at _____

For a workshop on _____

Date _____

For more information contact _____

See you there!

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Operation R.E.A.D.Y.
Resources for Educating About Deployment and You

Objectives

- ✎ Establish realistic expectations about reunion
- ✎ Recognize symptoms of stress
- ✎ Identify helpful and reliable sources of assistance

Ways to Communicate During Deployment

?

Expectations Of Change

**Crisis or
Threat**

**Hidden
Opportunity**

**Avoidance or Denial
Blame Others**

**Acknowledgment
Action**



Dead End



Beginning

Adjustments for Families

Directions: Take a few minutes to look at the following questions. Write out your answers in the spaces provided. You will have an opportunity to discuss your answers in your group afterwards.

1. How will it feel to have your soldier back in the house? Be honest about the good and the not-so-good aspects.

2. How do you think your children will react?

3. How will your soldier's return affect your work schedule, cooking habits, cleaning habits, free time, and general way of doing things?

4. Have you developed new interests or friendships? Will these change when your soldier returns?

5. What do you think will be the biggest change in your life when your soldier returns?

Workshop Evaluation*

1. Did you understand the objectives of this workshop? _____Yes _____No
2. Do you think these objectives were met? _____Yes _____No
3. If you answered No to either 1 or 2, please explain your answer below:
4. Circle the word which best describes the effectiveness of this workshop:

Inadequate Marginally Effective Effective Very Effective Outstanding
5. Based on your above response, what are your suggestions for improving this workshop?
6. How did you benefit from this workshop?
7. Did this workshop meet the needs of the participants? _____Yes _____No
8. Circle the word which best describes the facilitator's presentation:

Inadequate Marginally Effective Effective Very Effective Outstanding
9. Please share your comments about the facilitator's presentations?
10. If you were the next facilitator to lead this workshop, how would you improve it?

*Use the back of this sheet to continue your responses, if necessary.

Homecoming and Reunion

Reestablishing Intimate and Sexual Relations

One adjustment you may face when military separation occurs is reestablishing your intimate and sexual relationships.

Most military couples face the question, “How can two people work together toward achieving intimacy when one of them is often absent from the relationship for extended periods?”

Military couples often find that reunion may bring out feelings of uneasiness, and that their personal relationship is strained. Through an understanding of the effects of separation, you can better cope with the stress that accompanies reunion.

The following information about communication barriers and enhancers may help you to reconnect with your partner

Barriers to intimate communication and sexual relations:

- ✎ Unrealistic fantasies and expectations.
- ✎ Feeling anxiety about engaging in intimacy and sex.
- ✎ Feeling that your partner is a stranger.
- ✎ Feelings of anger, hostility, stress, or negative feelings about the separation.
- ✎ Concern about faithfulness to your relationship.
- ✎ Feeling that sexual relations need to be rushed to make up for lost time.

Communication enhancers:

- ✎ Communication will help bring you closer together. It gives you time to become reacquainted, and helps to let your partner know how you feel.
- ✎ Understand that feelings of anxiety are a very normal part of the reunion process.
- ✎ You have been apart from each other and you both have grown. Take time to get to know each other again.
- ✎ Discuss your negative feelings and frustrations. Fear of losing your partner plays a major role in developing negative feelings. Listen carefully to what your partner is trying to communicate to you.
- ✎ Don't assume the worst about your partner. If you have concerns about fidelity, talk to your chaplain or find a counselor who can help you work through these feelings.
- ✎ Besides communication, allow yourself time to readjust to being together again. Go slowly and enjoy your reunion.

Children's Reaction to Soldier's Return	
Reactions	Techniques
Birth to 1 Year	
Cries Fusses Pulls away from you Clings to spouse or caregiver Has problems with elimination Changes their sleeping and eating habits Does not recognize you	Hold Hug Bathe and change Feed and play Relax
1 to 3 Years	
Shyness Clinging Does not recognize you Cries Has temper tantrums Regresses - no longer toilet trained	Don't force holding, hugging, kissing Give them space Give them time to warm up Be gentle and fun Sit at their level
3 to 5 Years	
Demonstrates anger Acts out to get your attention; needs proof you're real Is demanding Feels guilty for making parent go away Talks a lot to bring you up to date	Listen to them Accept their feelings Play with them Reinforce that you love them Find out the new things on TV, at preschool, books
5 to 12 Years	
Isn't good enough Dreads your return because of discipline Boasts about Army and parent	Review pictures, school work, activities, scrap books Praise what they have done Try not to criticize
13 to 18 Years	
Is excited Feels guilty because they don't live up to standards Is concerned about rules and responsibilities Feels too old or is unwilling to change plans to accommodate parent Is rebellious	Share what has happened with you Listen with undivided attention Don't be judgmental Don't tease about fashion, music Respect privacy and friends

Homecoming and Reunion Stress

Whether you are a single or a married soldier, a single-parent soldier, a spouse, or a child, you will face certain stressors associated with Homecoming and Reunion. Below are some of the normal stressors you may face, along with some hints to help you adjust to the changes in your life.

Stressors

- ☞ Emotional letdown
- ☞ Restlessness or sleeplessness
- ☞ No one understands what I have been through
- ☞ Was my spouse faithful?
- ☞ Did my spouse miss me?
- ☞ My friends seem different
- ☞ I didn't expect things to change
- ☞ Other people's concerns seem petty
- ☞ I feel like a stranger at home
- ☞ How will the children react?
- ☞ Will the role I have filled change?
- ☞ Were my children treated well by their guardian?
- ☞ Can I make up for lost time?
- ☞ Did I handle things the right way?
- ☞ When will things feel normal again?
- ☞ I am concerned about finances
- ☞ I am concerned about future deployments
- ☞ The children appear confused and uncertain

Helpful Hints

- ☞ Accept that things may be different
- ☞ Talk about your experiences
- ☞ Go slowly—don't try to make up for lost time
- ☞ Spend quality time with your children
- ☞ Reassure your children. Change often frightens them
- ☞ Curb your desire to take control or to spend money
- ☞ Accept that your partner may be different
- ☞ Intimate relationships may be awkward at first
- ☞ Take time to get reacquainted
- ☞ Forget your fantasies. Reality may be quite different
- ☞ Take time to readjust
- ☞ Communicate with your partner and your family

Stress Symptoms

The following Stress Danger Signals focus on the medical and physical symptoms common to tension stress. Your physician can best determine your medical condition, but these guidelines will provide you with a general indication of your stress level. Check those signals which you have noticed:

- General irritability, hyperexcitability, depression
- Pounding of the heart
- Dryness of mouth and throat
- Impulsive behavior, emotional instability
- Overpowering urge to cry or run
- Inability to concentrate, flight of thoughts
- Feelings of unreality, weakness, dizziness, fatigue
- Floating anxiety, being afraid and not knowing why
- Emotional tension and alertness
- Trembling, nervous tics, easily startled
- High-pitched, nervous laughter
- Stuttering, other speech difficulties
- Bruxism, or grinding of the teeth
- Insomnia
- Hyperactivity, increased tendency to move about
- Excessive sweating
- Frequent need to urinate
- Diarrhea, indigestion, queasiness, vomiting
- Migraine headaches
- Pain in neck or lower back
- Loss of appetite or excessive appetite
- Increased use of prescribed drugs
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Nightmares
- Accident proneness

The more signs that are present, the stronger the likelihood that there is a serious problem. See your physician if you are concerned about these symptoms.

Reunion Stress-Coping Strategies

Most military families find that reunions are at least as stressful as separations. This seems to be true for couples with children, couples without children, single parents, and single soldiers coming back to friends and family. Following are some coping strategies which may help:

Expect to have a few doubts and worries.

- ☞ Your partner may think you don't need them anymore.
- ☞ Anxiety is a natural and normal part of getting back together.

Forget your fantasies.

- ☞ Give up any fantasies or expectations you may have about what homecoming day should be.
- ☞ Take it easy and let things happen naturally.

Don't expect things to be exactly they way they were before the separation.

- ☞ You've changed, your spouse has changed and your children have changed.
- ☞ Don't get upset by things that are done differently.

Tips on helping children adjust:

- ☞ Children can get angry about their parent being gone.
- ☞ Toddlers and preschoolers may act like the homecoming parent is a stranger. They might not understand about "duty" or "mission".
- ☞ Elementary school children and teenagers may understand, but show anger or fear by "acting out."
- ☞ Get reacquainted and take things slowly.
- ☞ Children are resilient.

Accept and share your feelings.

- ☞ Talk a lot about your feelings, and let your partner talk too.
- ☞ Really listen. Make sure you fully understand what your partner is saying before you respond.
- ☞ Communication is the key.

See things from the other person's point of view.

- ☞ An awareness that the soldier no longer feels a part of things helps us to understand why they can be upset by even the smallest changes.
- ☞ Recognition of the pride a partner feels in the way he/she handled everything alone will help the soldier to understand the importance of accepting changes made during separation.
- ☞ Children are people too. Try to understand how they feel. Change and uncertainty is often very frightening for them, so be patient.

Your family relationships should regain normalcy in a few months. However, if you had problems before you left, those problems may still be there when you get back. If you continue having problems adjusting after a few months, seek help through one of the following offices:

- ✧ The Army Community Service Center
- ✧ Family Program Coordinator
- ✧ Family Support Group leader for referrals
- ✧ Chaplain—a good source for confidential counseling
- ✧ Red Cross
- ✧ Social Work Services
- ✧ Community Service agencies—see your local phone book (e.g., Mental Health Department, Social Services Department)

If deployment was to a war zone, natural disaster or urban riots, be alert for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Symptoms of this disorder include:

- ✧ Depression—chronic numb or flat feeling.
- ✧ Isolation—feeling withdrawn from family and friends.
- ✧ Alienation—absence of meaningful contact with others.
- ✧ Avoidance of feelings—inability to feel or express feelings.
- ✧ Rage—bouts of unexplained anger; may be internal or acted out.
- ✧ Anxiety—unexplained nervousness, tension or hyperalert feelings.
- ✧ Sleep disturbances—insomnia, nightmares, etc.
- ✧ Intrusive thoughts—recollections of traumatic experiences that appear for no apparent reason.
- ✧ Startle responses—unusual, involuntary reactions to loud noises, i.e., automobile backfire.

PTSD probably won't go away on its own. It needs to be treated. If you or your spouse experience 4 or more of these symptoms regularly, seek professional help through one of the agencies listed above.

Sources of Support and Assistance for Army Soldiers and Families

1. *Army Community Service (ACS)*: ACS is the mainstay of family assistance for the Army on or near installations. It is staffed by paid professionals and volunteers. Among the services provided are Financial Management Assistance; Exceptional Family Members Program; Child Support Services; Family Advocacy; Relocation Services; and Information, Referral, and Follow-up.
2. *Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve Family Program Coordinator Offices*: Although not staffed at ACS levels, these offices provide information and referral services on all of the above-listed services, both military and civilian, for the families of Reserve Component members who normally reside away from Army installations.
3. *Family Assistance Center (FAC)*: FACs may be established on and off Army installations during periods of lengthy deployment. FACs provide assistance and information and referral on such matters as ID cards and DEERS, health care, legal matters, financial counseling and assistance, and family support.
4. *Rear Detachment*: A military unit may create a Rear Detachment when it deploys for extended periods of time. It is the primary point of contact for family members who have questions or who need assistance prior to and during separations.
5. *Family Support Group (FSG)*: The FSG is organized to provide mutual support for a unit's family members. It is affiliated with a specific military unit, ARNG Armory, or USAR Center. The FSG forms the third component of the Army's family support system during deployment. It operates during periods of normal operations as well, in close coordination with the affiliated unit and, if convenient, with ACS or the Reserve Family Program Coordinator's office.
6. *Installation Chaplain*: A good source for confidential counseling.

Other Sources of Support and Assistance for Soldiers and Families

Name

Location

Phone

[illegible]